

**Strategy Outline**

**For**

**Domestic Preparedness**

March 2001

## **A PREPAREDNESS STRATEGY FOR TERRORISM FIRST RESPONDERS**

This Preparedness Strategy for first responders to incidents of terrorism by necessity addresses federal, state and local involvement and interaction in preparing for and in responding to terrorist incidents. The Strategy envisions utilization of in-place teams like Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces, National Guard Civil Support Teams (formerly RAID), Metropolitan Medical Response Systems, National Medical Response Teams, and military units as providing important, secondary strength and expertise to local first responders. Furthermore, the establishment of a single point of contact for coordination of domestic preparedness programs is given a pivotal role at the federal level in this Strategy.

This Preparedness Strategy for first responders will focus on the needs of fire service and emergency medical first responders who together must intervene swiftly and safely if lives are to be saved following a terrorist act involving Weapons of Mass Destruction. Local law enforcement agencies also play a key first responder role to terrorist incidents so the local law enforcement component of a comprehensive strategy should be prepared by them to assure their specific preparedness needs are addressed.

So far, the federal government has taken a lead role in domestic preparedness for terrorism. Yet, given the expanse of the United States, with population centers scattered across the nation, the specifics of this Strategy, if followed, will ensure a more methodical achievement of local terrorism response preparedness benefiting larger areas of the country.

This Strategy addresses training, command, control, communication, equipment, procedures and performance capabilities while specifying the role of the Federal Terrorism Coordinator, yet to be established, and state governments in implementing the Strategy. This Strategy also builds upon what federal, state and local capabilities are already in place so that every additional dollar invested in domestic preparedness for terrorism *expands current readiness*.

### **Building Upon Current Readiness**

**This Strategy for terrorism first responders builds upon what is currently in place and would put the greater share of federal assistance into those geographical areas most ready to meet certain terrorism response capabilities.** As a point of reference, the current 28 Urban Search and Rescue Teams form a ready force of regional response capability to terrorism incidents where the primary need is heavy rescue. Likewise, the Metropolitan Medical Response Systems and National Guard Civil Support Teams add to an existing network of response systems available around the country.

The Strategy envisions the national Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces, the Metropolitan Medical Response Systems and the National Guard Civil Support teams all serving as strong secondary backup to local first responders. However, this Strategy draws attention to the need for a more methodical approach to future federal assistance that uses criteria and sets priorities based on local performance capability objectives, and enhancing current readiness levels. If adopted, the Strategy will build upon what national, regional and local response readiness is in place by awarding future grant funds to those local jurisdictions which are most near completion in preparedness for terrorism response. If followed, the Strategy will quickly result in a growing number of local jurisdictions becoming fully prepared rather than an increasing number of local first responders getting only enough funds to begin the readiness process. This Strategy constitutes the next logical step in a methodical approach to expanding local first responder preparedness for domestic terrorism.

**The current national preparedness effort, though useful, has overlooked the universally accepted planning concept of goal setting. The lack of clearly defined preparedness goals should be addressed through the development of performance capability objectives that, once met through the rational employment of local, state and federal assets, define the end-game, or goal: adequate preparedness.**

As presented below, this Strategy capitalizes on advancements made and fills existing gaps in readiness at the local level. Population criteria and risk assessment, used previously, still play a prominent role as they should. As proposed by Congress, distribution of grant funds through the states is appropriate, provided there is a clearly established “pass through” provision which will be followed and monitored. This Strategy provides such pass through requirements and is recommended for use by both the federal government and the states in qualifying and evaluating grant requests. The Strategy is a reasonable, methodical tool for federal officials to ensure federal assistance reaches local entities that will further the national network of readiness preparation for terrorism. It is a necessary requirement for federal officials to ensure assistance reaches the intended local government entities and adherence to this Strategy will accomplish this requirement.

### **The Strategy Outlined**

#### **Current Regional Strengths (nationwide)**

- 28 Urban Search & Rescue Teams (USAR)
- 72 Metropolitan Response Systems (MMRS)
- 10 National Guard Civil Support Teams (additional 23 Teams authorized by Congress)

#### **Federal Initiatives**

- Training - With expert advice from appropriate federal, state and local agencies, provide adequate funding for the development, publication and distribution of a comprehensive guide to fire and emergency medical first responders that addresses proper equipment, procedures,

and personnel protection necessary to handle WMD incidents and decontamination of victims. The guide should be distributed to all fire departments and will be a prerequisite training requirement for federal assistance in Fiscal Year 2002 and beyond. (See next page)

Would cover:

- Basic awareness
  - Basic steps in achieving preparedness for WMD
  - First responder performance objectives for preparedness
  - Proper protective measures
  - NBC agents and substances
  - Signs, symptoms and prescribed treatment
  - Decontamination procedures
  - Detection equipment
  - Incident Command System – unified command (providing for the inclusion of federal assets)
- Federal and/or state agencies allocate funding to local jurisdictions which adhere to this Strategy.
  - Grant funding to be competitive, based on local capabilities and characteristics.
  - Funding to enhance existing readiness levels so local jurisdictional fire and EMS first responders are trained and able to fulfill these performance capabilities:
    - Implement command and control using the standard *Incident Command System*
    - Communicate with other responding agencies via interoperable radios and/or mobile interconnect systems
    - Detect and identify CBRN agents using equipment off Standardized Equipment List
    - Protect first responders operating in or near such environment
    - Decontaminate a suitable number of non-ambulatory and ambulatory victims using proper procedures, equipment and personnel
    - Protect local hospital emergency rooms from contaminated convergent victims (external

decontamination at hospitals)

### **Local Jurisdiction Criteria for State/Federal Assistance**

- Must apply for funding from appropriate federal or state agency
- Must demonstrate outreach efforts to local, state and federal fire, EMS, law and health representatives, through interagency preparedness and response planning and mutual aid agreements
- Must demonstrate adoption of standard ICS
- Must use Standardized Equipment List
- Must have ready access to a certified hazardous materials response team capable of level A entry with back up team available
- Must submit grant request that:
  - States current training, equipment and response capability
  - Describes regional service readiness
  - Specifies needs and funding required to achieve domestic preparedness “performance capability” specified above
  - Spells out how local jurisdiction will carry out response, detection, identification of personnel protection, decontamination, pre-hospital care and transportation of victims to medical facilities
  - Details how regional MMRS, Civil Support Teams, US&R teams and federal assets would be accessed and under what circumstances
- Must certify that above-cited Comprehensive Guide for First Responders, developed in concert with appropriate federal agencies, is being used locally

### **Conclusion**

Efforts undertaken by federal, state and local government have resulted in progress. However, until a national strategy, such as that outlined above, is put in place, it will be exceedingly difficult to quantify the level of preparedness reached by our collective national response mechanism. Clearly defined goals that incorporate the differing capabilities and assets currently maintained by various levels of government must be developed and pursued.

This Strategy flows from a local fire service perspective and is based upon the concept of building upon existing response mechanisms. Such a Strategy has value because it builds upon what is in place, permits establishment of goals and provides an achievable pathway towards domestic preparedness. Further, it allows innovation at all levels of government that will lead to a more comprehensive approach to domestic preparedness.